

# Giving voice to residents in King County's unincorporated areas



Proposal for Community Service Areas offers a new public engagement framework for King County's unincorporated areas that would help give voice to more than 280,000 King County residents outside the boundaries of its 39 cities.



**King County**

*All residents should be able to have meaningful involvement in the decisions that impact their communities, and that's just as true for those who live in unincorporated areas as those in cities.*  
– King County Executive Dow Constantine

# BACKGROUND



**King County serves as the local government for residents of unincorporated areas** – the rural and urban parts of the county not included in the boundaries of any city. The county established the Citizen Participation Initiative in 1994 to provide a venue for ongoing communication with unincorporated area residents. Through this initiative, the County recognized six Unincorporated Area Councils (UAC), comprised of volunteer members elected by local area residents. But there are large swaths of unincorporated King County and many residents living in them unrepresented by a UAC.

In 2010, the King County Council's adoption of the 2011 Budget directed the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget to provide a plan to establish a new framework for the county's engagement strategy for unincorporated areas consistent with the King County Strategic Plan. Cost savings is among the goals.

Executive Dow Constantine is proposing new reforms to ensure that communication, outreach and engagement efforts reach all residents, particularly communities that have been historically under-represented in unincorporated areas. The proposal would create Community Service Areas that would represent all unincorporated communities. Information gathered from the Executive, King County Council staff, UAC presidents and community forums helped generate ideas for the proposed reforms. The proposal expands upon and replaces the 1994 Citizen Participation Initiative. It retains the value and expertise of the existing unincorporated area councils while expanding outreach to all unincorporated area residents.



## 2011 Outreach and Engagement Plan highlights

- The creation of **Community Service Areas (CSAs)** that encompass all of unincorporated King County, including areas without representation by UACs, allowing for greater participation by all residents in an annual CSA work program and annual meetings.
- **Interbranch teams** of existing staff from across the spectrum of county programs and services would coordinate public outreach and service delivery in each CSA, in close collaboration with the county councilmember for that district. Staff would continue working with UACs while expanding outreach to include work with community councils and other organizations.
- The proposal **preserves existing Community Service Centers** that provide remote access to county services, as well as existing liaison staff for the UACs who would now serve as a single point of contact for residents.



## Guiding Principles for a New Outreach and Engagement Program

- **Provides all unincorporated area residents with an opportunity to participate;**
- **Makes it easier for people to interact with King County;**
- **Empowers residents to choose their level of involvement across a spectrum of public participation;**
- **Acknowledges and respects the unique characteristics of communities: geographic, cultural and otherwise;**
- **Helps the county transition to being a rural service provider, and ease the transition for residents;**
- **Involves the cities that will eventually annex urban unincorporated areas;**
- **Makes efficient use of limited public resources;**
- **Integrates the county's public engagement, service delivery and customer service frameworks; and**
- **Engages the County Council and other branches of county government.**

# NEXT STEPS



**The Executive announced the proposal on April 18, 2011** after sending legislation and a report to the King County Council for consideration. For more information, contact Lauren Smith at [lauren.smith@kingcounty.gov](mailto:lauren.smith@kingcounty.gov).

*We want robust public engagement that informs, involves, and empowers people and communities from throughout the region.*

– King County Executive  
Dow Constantine



Find the report at [www.kingcounty.gov/exec/rural](http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/rural)

Alternative formats available by calling  
206-296-6500 or TTY 711.

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